JOHN SELDEN, M. P.

HIS POSITION AS AN AUTHOR AND SCHOLAR AND HIS INFLUENCE UPON ENGLISH LITERATURE AND SCHOLARSHIP IN THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY

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I HEREBY RECOMMEND THAT THE THESIS PREPARED UNDER MY SUPERVISION BY M. S. Goldman

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Recommendation concurred in:*

Committee on Final Examination*

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A SONNET

to

JOHN SELDEN

Ben Jonson told ~~thy~~ your virtues in a strain
Of classic beauty as was e'er his way
Who was the prince of poets in his day;
Yet I with callow courage still am fain
To link iambics in a fragile chain,
Hoping there still be some to read and say
Praise of old scholars is not all in vain.

~~Thou~~ You shal~~t~~ not be forgotten who so~~n~~long
Were Englands glory! though the steps of men
Stray from the <u>via media</u> that you knew ,
Though grotesque heresies wax daily strong,
The time of change draws near, of reason, when,
We shall return to Greece and Rome and you.

JOHN SELDEN, M. P.,

His Position as a Author and Scholar and His Influence Upon English Scholarship and Literature in the Seventeenth Century.

I

Introduction

While, in general, the vogue which an author enjoys among the readers of later generations is considered of more importance in determining his literary position than is the judgement of his contemporaries, there are particular cases in which works of real merit pass out of popular knowledge, becoming only the property of the learned and the curious, merely, because they were written with too scrupulous care for the literary conventions or mannerisms of their particular age. This may be said to find classic exemplification in the works of John Selden, which have been praised by the learned of each succeeding century, but which have enjoyed fewer and fewer readers as the interest in Classical and Semitic scholarship has steadily declined among literary critics and historians.

The seventeenth century has been adjudged the most learned in the world's history, and certainly in the history of English literature there was no other period in which so much emphasis was put upon the knowledge of Greek and Latin, in which so much pleasure was derived from classical quotation and allusions for their own sake.[1] Of this love of the old learning, this late Renaissance spirit, John Selden was

1 Isaac Disraeli. The Literary Character of King James I. in Literary Character of Men of Genius, London & New York, F. Warne

the veritable incarnation. No English scholar before him, unless it were Roger Bacon, had ever enjoyed half so splendid a reputation abroad. No other English scholar before or since was ever ~~so much~~ so absolutely the dictator of the learning of his time and nation. There were no dissenting voices when he was hailed as "magnus dictator doctrinae gentis Anglicae,[1] Englishmen were proud to call him by the title assigned to him by Grotius[2], the most glorious scholar of contemporary Holland, "Honor Brittanniae", which even his detractor Anthony à Wood was pleased to render with amplification "the honor of the English people."[3] It seemed that his learning was well nigh universal in its scope and because the scholars who were his friends and critics demanded it as the price of their approval, and because the generality of readers (this was by far the less important reason for he scorned rather than courted the rabble) thought well of the practice, he so filled his work with obscure quotation and learned digression that much of that which was once so much admired is now well nigh unintelligible to any save the trained student of the classics.

Not all the blame for the neglect of Selden in our day, however, must be laid at the door of declining interest in the classics, for, though he was not incapable of occasional smooth flowing and even sprightly composition, his style was, for the most part, exceedingly dry, his sentences were rambling and loosly constructed with even less regard for English

1 Sandys, G.W., History of Classical Scholarship, Cambridge, lib. II, 343

2 Grotius "De Jure Belli et Pacis" lib II, C. 2. quoted Sandys II p. 344.

3 Athenae Oxonienses, ed. Bliss, 1817, vol. III, p. 365.

syntax than the most obscure work of Milton. Then, too, the greater portion of his work was concerned with subjects of interest to the few rather than to the many so that with the growing specialization of studies it has appealed to an ever narrowing circle. Yet his work has ever been a mine of information for those in search of particular precedents and arguments. It is also not to be forgotten that though later scholarship has occasionally unearthed errors in detail, and though new evidence has sometimes made necessary a rejection of his conclusions, those errors are remarkably few in number when the magnitude of his labors is considered, and his conclusions are uniformally sound when the evidence at his disposal alone is considered, and as such were concurred in by the greatest of his contemporaries.

During the two hundred and sixty odd years since his death Selden's work has been greatly neglected but never discredited and, although, his readers grow fewer and fewer with the steady decline of classical interests his name remains as a sort of land-mark in English scholarship, and two and a half centuries have given us no other which so forcibly suggests that striving for universal erudition which was the most significent thing in the history of that long period of intellectual activity which we call the Renaissance. Today if we would speak of an Englishman who would seem to personify the world-wide hunger for knowledge which marked the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, rather than one who represents the merely insular manifestations of that intellectual phenomenon, that man would be Selden.

It may well be that the universal admiration with which Selden was viewed by men of the succeding century as well as by his own generation had in the end militated against the proper preservation of the details of his life and the proper advertisement of his work. The world wearies of encomiums, and a man whose work is not essentially interesting in itself may profit more by the attacks of his enemies than by continual laudations of his friends. Selden was perhaps too universally praised to excite interest. Except for the wretched efforts of Richard Montague, Tillesley and Sempil,[1] no one in England in his life time dared to attack him or his work. His opponents in controversial matters across the seas added greatly to his fame, for even the great Grotius deemed it no slight honor merely to have him as an opponent. Of later critics Bentley alone found meterial for serious objection, and it must be remembered that Bentley benefited greatly by the earlier labors of Selden when he came to his study of the Arundel Marbles. Few works on ancient inscriptions can not be improved upon in the light of new knowledge arrived at in the next hundred years following their publication. It will be seen then that by reason of the scholarly equipment necessary for the undertaking men did not approach Selden or his works lightly and so biographical materials are not so numerous as they might otherwise be. It must be remembered too that we have nothing from Selden's own hand concerning his life except the one page of Latin which seems to have been the

1 Sir James Sempil. He wouldbe forgotten had it not been for Selden's reply to him.

beginning of an autobiography. The Table Talk is perhaps the most impersonal personal volume in existence. In it we find what Selden thought of many things of a general nature but not what he thought of this man or that man and nothing[1] of what he himself did.

Some of the Selden's books-notably the De Diis Syris-ran through several editions in his lifetime and others in the fifty years following his death. It is remarkable, though, that no biography appeared until the year 1726 when Wilkins[2] prefixed a short Latin account of Selden's life to the Opera Omnia which he edited. This work of Wilkins is scarcely to be considered as satisfactory since his principal sources was Anthony à Wood's brief sketch in the Athenae Oxonienses, an account which presents little besides the obvious and was written with a mixture of enmity[2] against Selden because he was not an extreme Royalist, and pride in him as an Englishman andan Oxonian.[3]

Nearly a century elapsed before Selden had another biographer. In 1811 John Aikin,[4] whose great interests in matters of rather obscure learning gave him a happy sympathy with the two subjects of his biographical study, wrote his "Lives of

1 The reference to Sir. Kenelm Digby must be excepted. Selden may have cherished a dislike for Digby although once his intimate; especially does this seem probable if we credit Wood's story of the lost "Life of Roger Bacon."

2 David Wilkins, (1685-1745) Prebend of Canterbury and Archdeacon of Suffolk. He was of Prussian parentage and his real name was Wilkie which he anglicized.

3 Wood quotes the credulous and scandal monging Aubrey to considerable length.

4 John Aikin M. D., 1747-1822, father of Lucy Aikin.

John Selden and Archbiship Usher." This work was published in 1812 but seems to have never gone into a second edition and is consequently somewhat rare. It remains, however, up to the present time the most ambitious and the most authoritative life of Selden. It is very readable, although the lack of any sort of chapter divisions is somewhat annoying. Presenting together with an account of his life some criticism of the works of Selden, well interlarded with the quoted encomiums of seventeenth century scholars, it is supplemented by biographical notes on the more important persons mentioned, which sometimes contain new material, but frequently do not give an adaquate idea of the subject's relation to Selden. The gathering between two covers of the lives of both Selden and Usher is particularly fortunate for cross reference because of their long friendship and parallelism of their interests and careers. Dr. Aikin, however, does not seem to have made the most of this opportunity, and maintains too carefully the separateness of his two narratives.

Since the publication of John Aikin's work, Selden has been the subject of no very ambitious biographical study. Some magazine articles[1] have, however, been devoted to a study of his life and works, and he has been the subject of at least one pleasant essay.[2] He has also received fitting notices in books of general biography and an effort has been made to assign him a place in the history of the development of English literature. Notable among these last is the treatment in

1 H. D. Hazeltine Selden as Legal Historian in Harvard Law Review 1910.

2 "The Autocrat of the Dinner Table" in Herbert Paul's Men & Letters.

Hugh Walker's English Essays and Essayists, and the article by A. W. Ward in the eighth volume of the Cambridge History of English Literature. His Table Talk was edited by Arber in his "Reprints" in 1868 and by Singer in the "Library of Old Authors" in 1890. The best critical selection is that of Reynolds, Oxford 1892. The De Diis Syris has been translated by Hanson and published in Philadelphia. A few cheap editions of the Table Talk excepted, there have been no other recent publications of his work.

It will be seen from the above survey of the extant editions of Selden's works, the biographical materials and the small volume of the critical work that much remains to be done in the field of Seldenian studies. If a proper understanding of Selden's work is to be rendered possible for the average student of English literature, a modern critical edition of at least the more important English works is necessary. For such a task so thorough a knowledge of Greek and Hebrew as well as Latin is required as to make it almost to be despaired of in our day in which such an equipment is possessed by few, and it is probably that the work would require the collaborative efforts of several scholars. There is also need of a more careful biographical study of Selden in which might be incorporated the body of Aikin's findings, only after careful verification, and which would supply that deficiency in notes of a general and corroborative nature which is the most obvious weakness of the Lives of John Selden and Archbishop Usher.

The study which follows makes no claims to supplying this last need. I have, however, endeavored to

assemble a quantity of previously disregarded biographical data and critical opinion from the chief sources available to me and to verify them as carefully as possible by comparison with one another and with other materials which may be of value. Some attempt at original criticism and interpretation is made in the hope that some contribution may be made toward the developement of a more general appreciation of the high moral character of a truly great gentleman, the astuteness and patriotism of an able statesman, and the extraordinary literary talents and vast erudition of one of the profoundest scholars which the English speaking peoples have yet produced.

The following study has, for the sake of convenience in reading and reference, been divided into four major sections. In the first an effort is made to give in simple and concise form the main body of our knowledge of the life of Selden with particular reference to his public career, without an understanding of which there can be no true appreciation of his writings and private character. In the second a brief synopsis of his writings is made, especial emphasis being placed upon those in English, which have been the particular object of the present investigation. The third division has been devoted to an investigation of Selden's literary friendships, which were more numerous and interesting than those of any other man of his age. This has been made with special regard to Selden's possible influence upon his contemporaries and with some notice of his foreign correspondance, his patronage of less opulent literary man and his championship of the general cause of learning amid the ignoranceand

confusion of the commonwealth period. The concluding chapter deals with Selden's true position in the developement of English literature and scholarship viewed both in the light of contemporary opinion and that of succeeding tendencies and events.

II

The Life of Selden

Few men of letters have been more active in affairs of politics and statecraft than Selden, and some knowledge of his busy and remarkable eventful life is essential for the proper understanding of his literary character and varied scholarly activities. He was born in an obscure village, Salvington near Terring, in the county of Sussex on the sixteenth day of December of the year 1584, which was the twenty seventh of the reign of Elizabeth and fourth before the coming of the Great Armada.[1] His father was John Selden, a yoeman of fairly comfortable means,[2] and his mother Margaret, the only daughter of Thomas Baker of Rushington, a gentleman of some fortune and scion of an ancient knightly family of Kent.[3] There is a story that the older Selden won his wife by the aid of his skill as a violinist,[4] and it is certain that he

1 Aubrey calls him a "yoemanly man of about forty pounds per annum", quoted by Wood, Athenae Oxonienses, vol. 111, p 365.

2 For the chronology of Selden's life I have followed the outline prefixed to Arber's reprint of the Table Talk, checking all items except those quoted from G. W. Johnson's Memoirs of John Selden, London, 1834, which I have not seen. I have also referred frequently to Sir Edward Fry's article in the Dictionary of National Biography, vol. XVII.

3 Wood, p. 376, says that the Baker arms were carved in the marble above Selden's grave since he had never obtained any of his own. Since he might have had arms for the asking this seems another example of his unique independence.

4 Wood, vol. III, p. 366.

possessed considerable ability as a musician as all the sketches of Selden's life make mention of it, and the entry concerning the birth of the second John Selden is as follows, "1584---John, the sonne of John Selden, the minstrell, was baptised the 20th day of December." Selden, therefore, shared with his younger contemporary, Milton, the pleasure of a musical environment during his early years, but there is no evidence to show that like Milton he acquired any of his father's skill in handling of musical instruments.

The house in which Selden was born was a commodious cottage known as the Lacies. It was still standing in 1868, and Johnson on a pilgrimage thither in 1834 was able to read inside the lintel of the doorway a Latin distich said to have been composed by Selden as the age of ten years,

"Gratus honest mih' No Claudar Inito Sedeb'
Fur abeas: no su facta soluta tibi."[1]

In 1595 Selden entered the Free School at Chichester, and came under the instruction of Hugh Barker of New College, Oxford, who seems to have been a man of learning and sympathy, for we learn from Wood that it was "by his care and advice" that the pupil was sent to Hart Hall Oxford[2] and committed to the supervision of Anthony Barker, under whom he remained some three years applying

1 "Your are welcome to me honest man. I will not be closed. Enter and be seated. Thief be gone. I am not open to you", Arber quotes Johnson to the effect that the last characters of the first line have been obliterated, but that they were probably "que". It is a matter worthy of comment that the cottage bears the date 1601, but since no one has noted the inconsistency of this in reference to the statement that Selden was born there, it seems probable that the date is one of renovation rather than erection. If the inscription was written by Selden at the age of ten it must have waited seven years to be put in place.

2 Wood, Anthony, Athenae Oxonienses, vol. III, 367, gives the beginning of Michelmas term 1600 as the date of Selden's entry.

himself with diligence, particularly to logic and philosophy. There is no adequate record of Selden's Oxford residence, ~~at Oxford~~, a fact which seems strange in view of his early attainment in London of great reputation for scholarship, which would point to precocity in the mastery of the classic languages, which, moreover, is indicated by the interest of Hugh Barker and the story of the Latin distich. Aubrey says that Sir Giles Mompesson told him that Selden was a fellow resident with him at Hart Hall "and that he was a long scabby-pol'd boy but a good student".[2]

Selden left Oxford without taking a degree, and, removing to London for the study and practice of law, became a member of Clifford's Inn in 1602, whence he removed two years later to the Inner Temple. There, according to Aubrey, he had a chamber in the Paper building overlooking a garden and a little gallery to walk in. Aubrey further notes that he quickly attracted general attention by reason of his already vast erudition.

Of Selden's progress in his profession and general learning in the Inner Temple Wood has written as follows,

"After he had continued there a sedulous student for some time he did by the help of a strong body and vast memory, not only run through the whole body of the law, but became a prodigy in most parts of learning, especially in those which were not common, or little frequented, or regarded by the generality of students of his time.

2 Quoted by Wood, vol. III, p 377.

So that in a few years his name became wonderfully advanced, not only at home, but in foreign countries, and was usually stiled the great dictator of the learning of the English nation.

The truth is his great parts did not live within a small ambit, but traced out the latitudes of arts and, languages as it appears by those many books that he hath published. He had great skill in the divine and human laws; he was a great philologist, herald, linguist, statesman and what not. His natural and artificial memory was exact yet his fancy slow, notwithstanding he made several sallies into the faculties of poetry and oratory to ease his severer thoughts, and smooth his rough stile, which he mostly used in the books by him published in Latin."[1]

It is probably that this disinclination to appear publicly at the bar, which Wood notes, arose rather from Selden's tempermental preference for the quiet of his own study which was to become more and more apparent with the passing of years, than from any lack of ability as a court pleader, for such of his parlimentary discourses as have been preserved show that in speaking he possessed a lucidity and force of diction which he never attained to in his other writings, and it is certain that he was generally considered a convincing orator, and perhaps even an eloquent one. Moreover, that aptness of quotation, that knack for making apothegems so conspicuous in the Table Talk, and that biting humor which characterizes his controversial, work could not

1 Wood, vol. III, p.367.

have failed to give him the advantage in court debate. We may not suppose either that any inherent bashfulness disqualified him for the general practice of his profession, for the man who conversed freely with King James at Theobolds, bore himself so easily before the Court of High Commission, spoke so well in Parliament, and rebuked the Assembly of Divines at Westminister in such haughty fashion, was scarcely one to suffer stage fright in an ordinary court room. It is possible, too, that this was merely an early appearence of that tendency toward self indulgence in the way of being in all things his own master, which was to find more conspicuous exemplification, a little latter, in his refusal of the readership of Lyons Inn and the failure of King Charles to secure his acceptance of the office of Lord Keeper.

It was at about this time that Aubrey[1] says Selden became solicitor and steward for Henry Gray, Ninth Earl of Kent, with whose family and affairs he was to be intimately associated until the death of the Dowager Countess. Dr. Aikin, without explaining his reasons in detail, takes exception to this opinion of Aubrey and advances the theory that Selden never acted as steward, but was retained by the Earl and Countess as legal advisor, much as counselors at law are now frequently retained by individuals or estates, for many years at a time, to act for them in all matters requiring legal knowledge, as necessity may arise. Whether or

1 Quoted by Wood, vol. III, p. 377, in a paragraph which also contains scandalous insinuations. It is much mutilated.

not Selden actually held the office of steward seems a matter of small importance. It is certain that he was possessed of business knowledge and executive ability, for without these qualities he could never have accumulated the great fortune[1] of which he died possessed, but it may well be doubted if he would have cared to give to the details of such an office, so much of the time and energy which he accustomed to devote to his studies, even at the cost of rewards far more tempting than the perquisites of a stewardship. If his employment in a legal capacity by the Earl of Kent there is no lack of evidence, and of all the Englishmen of his day he was best qualified to protect and advance the interests of a great hereditary estate, being possessed of a great store of information regarding ancient seignoral privilege, as shown in his famous Discourse on the Privileges of the Baronage of England.[2] It is a matter of general record, too, that he enjoyed from a very early time the intimate friendship and constant patronage of the members of the House of Kent, and that he derived no little part of his great wealth from the bounty of the Earl and Countess.[3]

During the early years of residence in the Inner Temple, Selden became a member of the circle which was illumined by the wit and wisdom of Ben Jonson, then still in

1 40,000 lbs. in which may or may not have been included the town house of the Earls of Kent, White Friars.

2 Also the MSS Arguments Concerning the Baronies of Grey and Ruthen.

3 He was spoken of as wealthy as early as 1643, and Ben Jonson, who saw him in his youth, wrote of him as "living upon his own".

the fulness of his health and genius. Among other men of note whose friendship the young scholar enjoyed at this time were the poets, Drayton and William Browne, and the antiquaries Camden, Spelman, and Cotton, the last of whom was able to be of great assistance to him in his researches, and frequently loaned him rare manuscripts from his collections, which were of inestimable value in his research. During this early period, too, began that long association with Edward Heyward, his chamberfellow, to whom he dedicated his Titles of Honour, and who was destined to be one of his executors.

These first three years of this environment saw Selden make important progress in the study of English legal antiquities, a pursuit in which his three antiquarian friends must have rendered much valuable assistance.

In 1607 Selden finished his first book, the Analecton Anglo Brittannicon a digest from ancient and modern authors of references to civil government and public occurances of civil or religious nature in England prior to the Norman Conquest. "It was given to a bookseller; but did not find its way to the press till nine years afterwards, when it was printed at Frankfort; but in so incorrect and mutilated a form, that, as he complains, he could scarcely recognize his own performance"[1] From this forward, his pen was never idle, so that when Wilkins brought out his "Opera Omnia" in 1726, two great folio volumes were required to hold the Latin portion of his work and a third to hold the English.

1 Aikin, pp.4-5. Arber, Chronicle, p. 4, has for the year 1607: "He publishes his first work Analecton Anglo-Britanicon", an error of obvious origin."

In 1618 Selden brought out his History of Tythes which was destined to add greatly to his fame, and bring him to the personal notice of King James, though it caused his citation before the Court of High Commission, the necessity of submission to which never ceased to be a matter of annoyance to him, and a long controversy which was rendered exceedingly unpleasant by a royal order forbidding him to reply to the adversaries he could so easily have demolished before the world, as he did in his private correspondence.

In 1619 Selden finished his Mare Clausum[1] written at the request of King James as a reply to the Mare Librum of Hugo Grotius. For diplomatic reasons, however, it was not published until 1635 when it was received by King Charles who ordered a copy to be placed in his own library, another among the records of the Barons of the Exchequer, and a third in the archives of the Admiralty.

Selden began his political career at the age of thirty nine when in the year 1624 he was elected a member for the borough of Lancaster in the last parliament of King James. He had been consulted, however, in the matter of the protest of December 18, 1621. Selden's action in connection with the protest angered the king and he was committed to the custody of Sir. R. Ducie and examined before Lancelot Andrews ~~December 18, 1621~~. Thereafter, until the subversion of civil power by Cromwell, he was much in the public eye, sitting for

1 Wood, vol. III, p. 370, with his usual malignity toward Selden, interprets certain passages in this work as directly supporting royal levies made without consent of Parliament.

Great Bedwin in Wilts in the second parliament of Charles I, and for Ludgershall in the same shire in that King's third parliament. It seems probably that he did not sit in the short parliament of 1640, but was returned by his alma mater, the University of Oxford, to the Long Parliament, and after the death of his colleague, Sir Thomas Roe, was the sole representative of the University during the remainder of that famous session.

From the first, Selden became one of the great men in Parliament, a leader in the struggle for constitutional liberty, but he was not destined to enjoy his influence without much inconvenience and long imprisonment. His experiences in the last Parliament of James were not of an especially stirring nature, but in the second of Charles he took part with Wentworth and Noy in the attack upon Buckingham and was sent to the Lords as one of the Chief managers in the impeachment of the favorite. To him was assigned the presentation of the fourth article which charged the duke with neglecting to guard the seas and protect the merchants,[2] and of the fifth article which had to do with the affair of the French ship, the St. Peter. Selden was also nominated one of the secret Committee of twelve to prepare the proofs of the charges against Buckingham."[3] After the house was dissolved in June 1626, Selden retired to the Earl of Kent's seat

1 Wood, vol. III, p. 368, says that Selden sat for Great Bedwin in Wilts in the parliament which began February 6, 1625, i.e., the first Parliament of Charles. No other authority supports this view, and Aikin and the Dictionary of National Biography contradict it directly. Wood also says that Selden was a "constant member of all or most parliaments following during the reign of King Charles I," an evidence of the uncertainty of his knowledge of the Short Parliament.
2 Dictionary of National Biography, vol. XVII, p. 1152.
3 Ibid.

at "rest where he devoted the long vacation to study.

In the next year, Selden appeared as Counsel for Sir Edward Hampden in his suit of Habeas Corpus in the King's Bench and the later one regarding the legality of the warrant for his detention. Just before the opening of Charles' third Parliament, Selden met with other liberal leaders at the house of Sir Robert Colton, where "Selden and Coke argued that the reassertion of the ancient laws of the country must take first place, and that until this was accomplished no progress could be made in the redress of grievences." His opinion prevailed.[1]

On April 7, 1628 Selden delivered before the Lords a speech "in assertion of the liberty of the subject" in support of the resolution of the House of Commons. The records Selden quoted in this speech became the cause of a sharp quarrel. "Lord Suffolk was reported to have charged him with having tampered with one of the documents cited, and to have added that Selden deserved to be hanged."[2] Sir John Strangways declared in the House that Suffolk had used the language quoted, and the House, ten days after Selden's speech, presented to the Lords two charges against the nobleman. Suffolk hotly denied having made any such statement. Later in the same session, Selden spoke in favor of naming Buckingham, against the king's claim to the estate of a deceased bastard, and in a bill for the restoration of the personal estate of Sir Walter Raleigh to his son, Carew.

1 D. N. B., vol.XVII, p.1153.

2 Ibid.

When Parliament again assembled in 1629, Selden brought before it the case of a man named Savage who had been sentenced in Star Chamber to lose his ears, and "on February 12 he supported the petition of the printers and book binders against Laud's interference with their trade." Later in the same month, he was prominent in the discussion of the tannage and poundage question, and in the stormy debate of March 2, sounded a solemn note of warning of the dangerous trend of affairs.

Selden was one of the nine members who were taken before the Privy Council of Whitehall by reason of the Commons proceedings, and were delivered into the custody of Sir Alan Apsley, keeper of the tower, for confinement at the King's pleasure. Seals were at this time placed upon the papers of Selden, Eliot, and Halles by order of the King and Council. According to Gardiner,[1] Selden, on the occasion of the examination of the prisoners on March 17, a week after Parliament had been dissolved, denied his real part in the action which had given offense to the King. Selden's own account of his answers is too vague to be satisfactory. After a hearing in King's Bench, for which Selden prepared the argument for the prisoners, and some correspondance between the King and judges an effort was made to persuade them to accept guarantees of further good behavior. "This demand for security was resented by Selden as a gross indignity to men of position and honor and members of the late Parliament."

1 D. N. B., XVII, p. 1154.

Finally in May 1631, after two years and two months imprisonment of varying degrees of rigor, Selden was released upon petition of the Earl[1] of Arundel and Pembroke who were in need of his help in some legal matters involving knowledge of obscure points of law which he alone possessed. He was released, however, only upon giving of security to appear in Court on the first day of the next term, a procedure which was repeated for several years until he received his complete release by means of a full submission to the King in 1634. This action by Selden after his previous haughtiness would seem to indicate that his spirit had suffered somewhat from the inconveniences and long inaction of his imprisonment. It might also be interpreted ~~with that~~ as a gradual shifting of his allegiance from the extreme wing of the Parliamentary party to a more neutral ground, or even, as it was hinted at the time, to one of luke-warm sympathy for the cavalier cause.

In the long Parliament Selden continued his opposition to the encroachment of the King upon the rights of Parliament, but was no less staunch in his opposition to the illegal infringement of Parliament upon the prerogatives of the crown. His position, though ambiguous in the eyes of many contemporaries and unintelligable to an intense partizan, even now, was thoroughly in keeping with his philosophy of government as set forth in the Table Talk in

1 Thomas Howard, second Earl of Arundel and Surrey, whom Evelyn call the "Magnificent" and Walpole, "Father of Vertu in England". "Magnificent"

places too numerous to require citation. He believed all government was a contract between King and people, and he was anxious to see both parties keep to the letter of their agreement. When the King seemed to desire the nullification of the powers of Parliament, he opposed the King, but when he saw that Parliament seemed about to overthrow the King, he drew away from it, and would have no hand in what he considered the breaking of a contract for all time. His creed was simply that the government of England was and by right should be "by King, Lords and Commons".

Selden was a member of the Committee appointed to investigate the papers of Strafford, but opposed the proceedings of the Commons against the great minister. In November 1640, he was placed on the Committee on the state of the kingdom, and in the same month attacked the Marshal's Court and opposed the Crown on the question of ship money. In February and March of the next year he stoutly opposed the abolition of episcopacy, and in May signed the Declaration of adherence, yet in June he was placed on the Committee which handled the impeachment of Laud. In 1642 Selden seems to have shifted further toward the royalist side, for he was among those whose attendance was required by a House order of February 4.[1]

In 1642 King Charles being displeased with Lord Keeper Littleton thought of intrusting the great seal to

~~1. Lucius Cary, second Viscount Falkland, killed at Newburg 1643~~.

[1] Which required the attendance of members suspected of Royalist sympathies.

Selden and requested the opinions of Hyde and Lord Falkland[1] in the matter. Their opinion was that, "They did not doubt of Mr. Selden's affection to the King, but withal they concluded, he would absolutely refuse the place, if it were offered to him. He was in years, and of a tender constitution; he had for many years enjoyed his ease, which he loved; was rich; and would not have made a journey to York, or have layn out of his own bred, for any preferment, which he had never affected."[2] A report which would seem to indicate that they had consulted Selden in the matter, for Hyde and Falkland both enjoyed his personal friendship, and his open adherence to the royal cause was doubtless more to have been desired than that of any single man in England.

In the question of the control of the military forces of the King dom which arose in the next year Selden opposed both the King's Commission of Array and the Parliamentary Ordinance of the Militia, and refused to be swayed either by the extreme Parliamentarians, or by Falkland's personal efforts at persuasion. Of his subsequent action in regard to the nomination of lords lieutenants, and of his own reported acceptance of a Commission as as deputy lieutenant,[3] there seems to be some doubt. There is certainly no evidence that he ever discharged the duties of deputy lieutenant.

Waller, upon the discovery of his plot, was

1 Lucius Cary, second Viscount Falkland, killed at Newbury, 1643.
2 Clarendon History of the Rebellion Bk. IV, 445 ed. London 1702. Quoted by Arber Eng. Reprints., Table Talk, outline page 7.
3 The Dictionary of National Biography XVII, 1155 following Wood says that Selden accepted the Commission. Aikin is doubtful on grounds of consistency.

examined in regard to Selden's knowledge of it, and confessed that he had visited Selden with the intention of securing his aid, but, having broached the matter in a general way, found Selden so opposed to anything that savored of unconstitutional violence that he lacked the courage to go into the matter further.

Later in 1643[1] Selden was one of the members of Parliament who attended the assembly of Divines at Westminster, where he took cruel delight in demolishing the arguments of the presbyters, whom as a class he sincerely despised, making use of his vast store of sacred learning rather "to purplex rather than inform his auditors," his interests being "to humble the jure-divinoship of Presbetry".[2] Nevertheless, he took the covenant and was appointed Clerk and Keeper of the Records of the Tower, a position which gave him additional opportunities for scholarly research and which after 1650 he retained for that reason alone the emoluments having ceased probably because of the financial difficulties of the time.

Two years later Selden was appointed one of the eighteen commissioners of the admiralty, and in August of this same year, (1645) declined the mastership Trinity Hall Cambridge, most probably because of loyalty to his alma mater, Oxford, which had suffered so much through adherence to the royal cause.

After 1645 Selden, (having no sympathy with the radical trend of the revolution) practically withdrew from

1 In this year Milward became rector of Great Braxted.

2 Fuller, Thomas, Church History, lib.ix, sec.9; quoted by Reynolds, p.

public life. His last speech was delivered on February 24, 1646 in favor of the abolition of the Court of Wards. In 1649 it seems that he assisted a Committee appointed by the Council of State to consider the dignity and procedence of ambassadors, a work for which his labor in the compilation of his Titles of Honour admirably fitted him. In 1647 he had been voted 5000 pounds as compensation for his imprisonments by the King, but Anthony à Wood says that "some there are who say that he refused, and could not out of conscience take it".[1] Such testimony is rendered credible[2] both by Selden's generosity in other matters and by his growing disinclination to be identified with the lawless conduct of the Parlimentarians. It is impossible, also, that, again, he was moved by that fondness for his own ease and safety which was so deep rooted in his nature. The saying in Table Talk, "The wisest way for men in these times is to say nothing." was one which in these later years Selden practiced as well as preached. He had no part in the trial and execution of the King and the rise of Cromwell, and just how strongly he felt about these matters must perhaps always remain a secret, since he died before the Restoration, but it is certain that he viewed them with little favor, for the law and the Constitution were in his eyes always the most precious heritage of the nation.

After his withdrawal from public life he applied himself to his studies with even more zeal than before,- though even in the time of his greatest parlimentary activity

1 Anthony a Wood Ath. Ox. Vol. III, p.367.
2 See also D. N. B. XVII, 1160.

he had found opportunity to write and publish - living quietly at White Friars among his books, his works of ancient art and his other curiosities. Here too he was wont to entertain those of the friends of his youth among them Edward Heyward, Hobbes and Ussher, who still remained alive, and some of those among his parlimentary and legal associates whom he found most congenial, as Bulstrade Whitelocke and Sir Mathew Hale, afterward Lord Chief justice of the Court of King's Bench. Here the dowager Countess of Kent[1] died on December 3, 1651, leaving to Selden the house itself, all her personal estates, including her lease holds, and many heirlooms of the House of Grey. After her death, Selden's own health began to fail. He died of dropsy November 30, 1654, and was buried with great pomp two weeks later in the Temple Church.[2] His funeral was attended by many of the chief men of the country, and the Lord Primate of Ireland, Usher, preached the funeral eulogy "in terms adequate to his (Selden's) merit; and did not hesitate to humiliate himself in the comparison by saying that "he himself was scarce worthy to carry the books after him:"[3]

The greater part of his estate, valued at 40,000 pounds he left to his executors, Edward Heyward, Hale, John Vaughan, and Rowland Jewkes the Elder, and to them, too, he left his books which later came to the Bodleian Library at Oxford. He also left small legacies to relatives and servants, and returned to members of the Grey family some of

1 The story of Selden's marriage to the Countess of Kent rests on Aubrey.
2 For details of his funeral and grave see Wood, vol. III, p.p. 376-8.
3 Aikin Lives of Selden and Ussher p.287.

the personal property given him by the Countess, among it the diamond hat band of the Earl of Kent which Aikin esteems worthy of special mention.

Those who seek herosim of a dazzling sort must look for it elsewhere than in the character of Selden, for the things which he loved most were peace and the law. In his youth and the vigor of his manhood he had greater love for the law, and in his age for peace. In the shifting of those values lies all the apparent inconsistencies of his character. Professor Saintsbury has said that Selden "was the first and greatest of the 'Trimmers'",[1] and such he was, if the word be taken in the sense of placing patriotism above partizanship, which the Marquis of Halifax gave it in his Character of a Trimmer. In all things from politics to the regulation of his personal habits, this greatest scholar of seventeenth century England walked in the via media of the philosophers. In the light of this thought his inconsistency becomes consistent, and if it be argued that he sometimes preserved his ease at the cost of his principles, it must be remembered that he also put ambition aside for the sake of peace and the pursuit of learning, and perhaps even for the sake of the same conscience of which some would think he had so little. At least as Herbert Paul says, "The 'great refusal has never been made with more dignity.'"[2]

1 In Traill's Social England ed 1909 vol IV, sec. 1. p 136 fol.

2 "The Autocrat of the Dinner Table in Men and Letters. London 1901 p 332.

III.

The Works of Selden.

It must be remembered in any study of the literary work of John Selden that in the most learned age of English literature he wrote only for the most learned. He subscribed with enthusiasm to the much quoted Horatian, "odi profanum vulgus"[1]. Such a sentiment one finds in the preface to the first edition of Titles of Honour beginning "Bless me Mercury from the old enemy, the daring ignorant,"[2] and in the preface to the second edition of the same work;

"The forms of patents or charters of creation, and the like are inserted at large in the tongues we find them: as Latin, French, Spanish. So are some ceremonials of coronations and creations, and the Spanish pragmatia concerning precedence, and the attributes to be given, in the abstract or concrete to the persons of honour; and that without translations. And so is also whatsoever is else cited in Latin, French, Spanish and Italian. For either the discourse in English that accompanies it, sufficiently supplies a translation, or else the matter of language is such, that a fit reader, assisted with that discourse may without difficulty understand it. For I expect not here a reader without some such measure of knowledge, as is usually had by liberal education. And that of Lucilius in the front of the first edition speaks the mind also;

1. Herbert Paul, Men and Letters P. 326 speaking of Selden's political rather than literary character, says; "Selden had too much of Horace's contempt fot the unholy mob."
2. Opera Omnia Vol. III, p. 89

Persiam non curo legere, Laelium Decimum volo." Again in his remarks to the reader prefatory to his Notes Upon Draytons Polyobion he bursts forth in this fashion: "The purblind ignorant I salute with the English of that monitory epigram.[2]

"Εἰ δέ, γε παμπαν
Νηις ἐφυς Μουσέων φίλον ὁ μὴ νοεων"

He then proceeds to define his idea of ignorance as if afraid that the ordinary connotation of the word is not sufficiently inclusive.

Selden's Latin works occupy twice as much space in the Opera Omnia of 1726 as do his English. Herbert Paul speaks of his Latin style as still more crabbed"[3] than his English, in which criticism he follows in the main Aikin[4], Wood[5], and Clarendon[6]. The last of these has made his criticism in this fashion. "His style in all his writings seems harsh and sometimes obscure, which is not wholly to imputed to the abstruse subjects of which he commonly treated out of the paths trod by other men, but to a little undervaluing beauty of style, and much propensity to the language of antiquity: but," he adds, " in his conversation he was the most clear discourser, and had the best faculty of making hard things easy, and presenting them to the understanding of any man that hath been known. " This last

1. Opera Omnia Vol. III p. 105- 106

2. Ibid Vol. III p 1731 Selden himself translates the Greek in this fashion in his footnotes " If thou hast no taste in learning, meddle no more with that thou understandest not".

3. Men and Letters p. 321

4. Pages 5 & 6 in which is quoted a truly extraordinary sentence from the Analecton-Anglo Britannicon.

5. Athenae Oxonienses, p. 367.

6. Life, 1674 pt.1, p.16.

may well be appreciated after even a short perusal of Table Talk.

Since a list of all of Selden's known works may be obtained by a perusal of the table of contents of the Wilkin's Opera Omnia and whole or. partial bibliographies are to be found in Wood's Athenae Oxonienses, and in the standard books of the reference, I shall not devote time or space here to the catalogüing, but proceed to investigation of those best known and most important of his English works, Titles of Honour, History of Tythes, and Table Talk. It is worth noting perhaps in passing, however, that the two most widely known of the Latin books, the Mare Clausum and the De Diis Syris, perhaps did more for the establishment of his reputation abroad, than any of his English works. Both were translated into English, the first by the literary pirate and journalist, Marchmont Needham in 1663, the other published so late as 1881 in Philadelphia is by an American , Hanson.[1]

The only other of his Latin works which to my knowledge has been done into English is the Jani Facies etc. translated by Adam Littleton under the pseudonym of " Redman Wescott" which was published in Tracts at London 1683, folio. The Mare Clausum was written in the time of James[2] at his personal request to vindicate the Claims of the English Crown against the Mare Librum of Hugo Gratius . Certain diplomatic negotiation with Denmark caused the King to suppress it for the time, but it

1. I have not seen this translation nor am I able to identify the translator. One American historian of that name living in 1881, the Rev. J. W. Hanson is listed in Allibone.

2. 1619 (?).

was finally published in the reign of Charles [1] as noted in the preceeding chapter. This was answered by Graswinckel in a work Maris Liberi Vindicae etc. published at the Hague in 1653, in which, under the pretense of attacking a work on the jurisdiction of ~~of pretense of attacking a work on the jurisdiction of~~ Italian waters by Petrus Baptista Burgus, he assailed Selden whom he affirmed to have written the Mare Clausum for the purpose of obtaining royal forgiveness for certain of his political acts.

Against this insinuation Selden defended himself in the last of all his works, his Vindicae, wherein his indignation most happily made him more direct in style than was his wont. This Vindicae is of special interest, aside from the controversy in question, because it contains some biographical material concerning his relations with the Court of James and his imprisonment.

The De Diis Syris enjoyed an enormous popularity among the learned, and supervised by the great Daniel Heinsius, and Selden's correspondant, the distinguished professor and divine Louis De Dieu, [2] was issued from the press of the Elzevirs at Leyden in 1629. It was also republished at Leipzig [3]

1. 1635 fol.

2. Aikin calls him Le Dieu and De Dieu in rather indiscriminate fashion. Selden's letters to him are not among the epislolae in Vol II of the Opera Omnia, but are prefixed to the dedication of De Diis Syris. They read "De Dieu".

3. List of editions as in the D . N. B.

1668, at Amsterdam 1680, and in Ugolini's Thesaurus Vol XXIII, 1744, and at Venice 1760 . De Diis Syris was the first work of any scholar of western Europe, dealing exclusively with oriental mythology, and it may be said to have been of no small importance in creating an interest in the subject. In Selden's time the secret of the cunieform alphabet had not been discovered, so his chief sources were the Bible, the works of classical authors, and the references in rabbinical literature, yet he seems to have made the best possible use of the limited materials at his disposal, and to have arrived at a fairly complete idea of the polytheism of the nations with whom the Israelites came in contact. Certainly the time was well chosen for such a work . It earned for him the title of πολυμαθέστατος from one of his English comtemporaries, Gataker.[1]

Selden's longest, and in his own opinion his best, English work was the Titles of Honour published at London in 1614, 1631, and in 1690. It was translated into Latin by Arnold and published in quarto at Frankfort in 1696.[2] Aikin says of the Titles of Honour that " It appears to have conferred a great additional reputation upon the author who made a second edition in folio, with large additions

1. Quoted by Sandys, p. 342 .

2. For editions N. D. B. XVII, 1161

in 1631. On comparing the new preface and dedication of this edition with the original ones, it was gratifying to observe how much in that period the writer's style had cleared itself from obscurity and pedantry that had formerly infected it--- a proof that commerce with the world and habits of business are as necessary as the studies of the closet to proficiency in the art of writing . It may be added that it is regarded as a great legal authority on these subjects ."[1]

It enjoyed a greater popular vogue among the gentry of England than Selden's other works, and doubtless lead to his appointment during the Long Parliament as a member of a committee to determine the proper order of precedence among foreign ambassadors. John Locke said, in rather decisive fashion, in his Thoughts Concerning Reading and Study for a Gentleman, " Selden's Titles of Honour a gentleman should not be without." William Nicolson, Archbishop of Cashel, gave the same opinion in somewhat amplified form in his English Historical Library

Titles of Honour covers a wide field dealing with titles of the lesser nobility and gentry as well as those of sovereign princes, and though it is written with particular reference to England, deals with all lands and ages. The style though rambling and marked by a multitude of apparently purposeless learned digressions is not unpleasant,

1. This and other remarks on the same work, Aikin, p. 11, 12 , 13.

and the whole would make entertaining reading were it not for the absolute riot of untranslated foreign quotations, for which, as we have seen, in the preface, Selden offered no apology. The number of these is simply maddening to the average reader; one passes without warning from a page of English (that is a page which is for the most part English; there are none entirely so) to one of Latin, and even when the shorter quotations in French, Spanish, Italian, German, Greek, Arabic, Hebrew, Persian, or Anglo-Saxon are accompanied by a translation, as is often the case, their effect is rather to frighten than to invite other than erudite readers, and the mere mechanical effect of a page bespattered with italics and the characters of three of four alphabets is decidedly unattractive. Probably because of this, and because of the growth of democracy which has done much to lessen the practical importance of Selden's learned investigations in this particular field, Titles of Honour has not been so much read as the History of Tythes and Table Talk in recent times.

The History of Tythes was the only one of Selden's books which got him into serious difficulties. In it while not, according to his protestation, attempting to overthrow the jure divino theory of tithes and their payment to the clergy, he so arranged his historical material as to make the whole tithing system seem rather a matter of civil than of divine law. The book had circulated freely in manuscript for some time before its publication in 1618[1] and was regarded

1. Reynolds ed. Table Talk p. 179 note speaks of the History of Tithes as published in 1617. The title page bears 1618.

in advance by the clergy as heretical at least and at most but little short of blasphemous . So its appearence was greeted by shocked and angry protests . Selden was summoned before the Court of High Commission and received partial forgiveness by a submission which has been the subject of much controversy and seems to have been a matter of annoyance, and chagrin to him throughout life. It appears that Selden expressed to the judge, in writing, his regret at having given offense to the King, without retracting any portion of his statements. He was summoned to Theobolds by King James and took with him Ben Jonson, as a sort of sponsor. The King seems to have enjoyed Selden's display of wit and erudition in conversation, and it was upon this or a subsequent visit that he received the royal command to write tracts On the Birthday of Our Saviour and Concerning the Number 666 , and perhaps also for the Mare Clausam . James, while not retaining anger against Selden for his action in this matter of the History of Tithes, was too much wedded to the idea of divine right and his own epigram " No bishop, No king," to permit Selden to continue in the same vein, and laid upon him an absolute command that neither he nor his friends were to answer the attacks made upon it by Sempil, Tillesley and Montagu. This prohibition seems to have

1. A justification of Selden's conduct in this matter occurs in Paul's Men and Letters p. 317 & 318

2. Selden's real views upon such matters seem to be found in "Numbers" Reynolds p. 120

rankled in Selden's soul and his indignation toward his critics, shown in certain " animadversions" which saw the light many years later, was sufficient to make him drop his heavy style and assume a livelier one better suited to spirited controversy. He also expressed his pique in undisguised fashion in an address to the Duke (then Marquis) of Buckingham in the apparent hope that the great favorite's interest might secure the lifting of the ban set upon his freedom.

The History of Tithes traces the developement of tithing systems from the time of Abraham's payment to Melchizedek down to England of Selden's own day. The practices of Jews, pagans, and Christians are all given in detail, and if the divine law theory suffers by Selden's treatment, the civil law arguments in favor of their payment are reinforced by a huge array of precedents and statutes.

The book is far more interesting and readable than most of Selden's other works, a fact which has made it second only to the Table Talk in general favor. There are at least a few pages of unbroken English, and the majority of the quotations are from the Bible or other sources more generally known than the authorities most frequently referred to in his other works.

Table Talk holds a unique place in English literature since it was not written by Selden, whose name it bears, yet is in very truth his book, and reflects the true character of the great statesman and scholar far more clearly than any work from his own hand. It is a little collection of his utterances on various subjects of interest, taken down by the Reverand Richard Milward, Selden's amanuensis, as he delivered them in informal fashion while

at dinner. The collection was first published from Milward's manuscript in 1689, nine years after his own death and thirty five after the death of Selden. It seems probable that it was put together within two or three years after the death of Selden, since in the dedication to his executors, Hale, Jewkes, Heyward, and John Vaughan the first is spoken of as a judge of the Common Pleas, an office which he ceased to hold in 1658[1]; but was probably withheld until both the Commonwealth and the almost absolute monarchy of the Restoration had passed away, because its sentiments, in spite of careful avoidance of discussion of concrete instances of political action during the revolution, were scarcely favorable to either form of government. Reynolds, its latest and most careful editor, has pointed out[2] that the year of the "Glorious Revolution", which brought in the form of government in which Selden put most trust, was peculiarly auspicious for the publication of his long suppressed views. During the period between its compilation and first publication, manuscript copies were made, and the Harleian manuscript 1315 one of the three extant, (among which is not found that from which the edition of 1689 was printed) bears a note in Harley's own writing to the effect that it had been given by Charles Earl of Dorset to a bookseller who delayed publication, and that in the interim Thomas Rymer sold a copy to the publicist Churchill who with his associates brought out the edition of 1696.[3]

1. Reynolds, Introduction p.X, quoting Singer.

2. Ibid p.XI.

3. Reynolds, Introduction p.XII.

A full discussion of the manuscripts[1] is found in the introduction to S.H. Reynolds' edition printed at Oxford at the Clarendon Press in 1892. Table Talk has seen many editions in the two hundred and thirty years since its initial appearence, and was included by Wilkins 1726 in the Opera Omnia, though he seems to have had grave doubts as to its authenticity[2]. Other editors, however, have been unanimous in their acceptance of Milward's statement in his dedication to the executors that " you will quickly perceive them to be his " - Selden's -" by the familiar illustrations wherewith they are set off: in which way you know he was so happy, that (with marvelous delight to those who were with him) he would presently convey the highest points of religion, and the most important affairs of state to an ordinary apprehension" The similarity of this character of Selden to that found in Clarendon is rather striking . We know that Selden's reputation as a conversationalist was a matter of general comment among his contemporaries, but there is no table wit recorded to the credit of Milward, a circumstance which seems to render the hypothesis of any imposture on the latter's part not to be easily credited.

Table Talk consists of pithy sayings divided into little groups under various heads which in their turn are arranged alphabetically. There are one hundred and fifty four of these groups, and though they treat of all manner of things the whole begins and ends with religion, which is the most important subject

1. Harleian 690; Sloane 3513; and Harleian 1315. The last is the basis of Reynold's text.

2. Aikin seems to insinuate that Wilkin's had his own reasons for casting doubt upon the authenticity of Table Talk; what these reasons were is not clear.

treated, or rather the subject most fully and most frequently treated. The first group is entitled " Abbies ", the last " Zealots. " Milward says that his acquaintance with Selden's familiar conversation extended over twenty years, and since there is internal evidence[1] in one which points to its utterance during the year 1653, we may place the beginning of Milward's association about 1633 or 1634. Milward does not say that his note taking began at the beginning of his intimacy with Selden,[2] and it is improbable that the earliest portions can be separated from the rest and assigned a date on the basis of internal evidence. No editor has, to my knowledge, suggested that they may cover only a few of the twenty years. An investigation of the matter would scarcely develop any certain evidence, so the twenty year theory of compilation is likely to stand.

Table Talk had been praised by many sorts and conditions of men. Dr. Johnson[3] who derived from it his own style of witty conversation believed it superior to anything of the sort in French [4] while Coleridge [5] praised it in a single sentence

1. The mention of a letter from Dr. Langbraine

2. "I had the opportunity to hear his discourse twenty years together and least all those excellent things that usually fell from him might be lost, some etc."

3. "It is no disparagement to a strong man's original force to say that Samuel Johnson derived his colloquial manner from John Selden ." Men and Letters p. 315.

4. "Boswell 'Their (French) ana are good.' Johnson ' a few of them are good; but we have one book of that kind better than any of them; Selden's Table Talk' " Boswell "Life of Johnson " ed. by Hill G.B. ,Oxford 1887 Vol V Page 311

5. Works, ed. Shedd, New York 1868. Vol. IV p. 378

which is perhaps as well known as any in English criticism, "There is more weighty bullion sense in this book, than I ever found in the same number of pages of any uninspired writer."

There is a vast amount of wit and wisdom in the Table Talk, and the two are linked together in most effective fashion. There are no anecdotes told for the mere love of telling. Each has its definate place and use in the clinching of an argument or the developement of an idea. The illustrations are always apt and always delightfully concrete. Thus under judges.

"Little things do great works when great things will not. If I would take a pin from the ground, a little pair of tongs will do it, when a great pair will not. Go to a judge to do a business for you; by no means he will not hear of it; but go to some small servant about him and he will dispatch it according to your hearts desire."[1] Everyone has sometime or other occasion to pick up a pin, the application is in this fashion rendered universal. If it seems a little hard on judges, remember Selden had suffered much at their hands and had little reason for faith in their sense or integrity. Perhaps the wittiest of all Selden's aphorisims is the oft quoted one which most effectively pricks the bubble of human prejudice, it is that which immediately precedes this just given, the one entitled "God's Judgements".

"We cannot tell what is a judgement of God; 'tis presumption to take upon us to know. In time of plague

1. Reynold's "Judges" P. 87.

we know we want health; in time of war we know we want peace, and therefore pray to God to send us peace. Commonly we say a judgement falls upon a man for something in him we cannot abide. An example we have in King James, concerning the death of Henry IV of France; one said he was killed for his wenching, another said he was killed for turning his religion. No, says King James, (who could not abide fighting) he was killed for permitting duels in his Kingdom ."[1]

The reading of Selden's Table Talk has not fallen off in recent years as has interest in his other books. The nineteenth century saw a number of good editions of this work of which the most interesting are the reprint of the first edition, edited by Arber and published in 1868 under one cover with Sir Philip Sidney's Apologie for Poesie and Webbes Travels, and the scholarly work of Reynolds to which I have already referred so often. The last is a monument to the painstaking scholarship of the editor and so far as notes and textual revision are concerned leaves little to be desired. It was undertaken , so Reynolds says, at the suggestion of Mark Pattison who " was an enthusiast for Selden" and "considered him a typical Englishman, at once a representative of the best points in English Character, and wholly free from its common prejudices and short comings."[2] Because the work of Reynolds is so good in these respects, it seems especially unfortunate

1. Reynolds LXV "Gods Judgements" p. 86

2. Reynolds p. IX.

that he should have been so lacking in real sympathy and affection for Selden. It is safe to say that no more unfavorable opinion of Selden is to be drawn from Anthony a Woods' sketch in the Athenae Axonienses, replete as it is with Aubrey's unverified scandal, and Wood's own slighting remarks, than from the introductory sketch prefixed to Reynolds Table Talk. His criticism of Selden's style is unrelieved by any appreciation of its occasional beauties, and with more than Victorian prudishness he declares in referring to a few plain spoken passages that the "book is disgraced by the insertion of several indecent references and expressions which add nothing to the force of the passages in which they occur",[1] an observation worse than silly since there may be two opinions about the indecency of the matter, and the "references and expressions" are among the most forceful of his illustrations. As if conscience stricken Reynolds adds that "Selden himself could hardly have wished "them to go down to posterity." Selden probably would not have cared two straws one way or the other. He had no interest in the salacious, but wrote and spoke what seemed necessary for his purpose. Reynolds would have found difficulty in surviving a certain passage in Selden's preface to his Notes on Michael Dryton's Polyolbion, wherein he was certainly writing for posterity, and where he illustrates his remarks with a note on two Latin passages, one from the Golden Ass of Apuleius and one from Plautus, which are harder on a too delicate stomach

1. See Herbert Paul on this prudishness of Reynold's, Men and Letters p. 321.

than anything in the Table Talk . Again Reynolds insinuates that in his imprisonment Selden felt honored to be in the company of Hollis, Eliot and Valentine[1], an idle supposition if one remembers that Selden had enjoyed far more distinguished company out of jail.

It may be said that Selden has been more widely known since his death by the Table Talk than by all his other work considered together . Certainly, as we have seen, it has been admired by some of the great figures of English Literature, and has not been without influence upon their colloquial style. It proves conclusively the contention of Lord Clarendon that Selden was happier in his speech than in his writing, and explains better than does even his great reputation for learning, and the kindness and hospitality of his nature, how he was able to win in his youth the friendships of the last great Elizabethian men of letters, and in his age that of some of the great wits of the Restoration.

Table Talk is a book of sheer subatance. There is scarcely an unnecessary word. In it Selden's remarkably logical mind is shown in all its true force. We see him as a man who thought through things to a definate conclusion and was then able to carry that conclusion to others in a few concise telling sentences. Of its value as a revelation of his true self there can be no better summary than that with which Professor A. W. Ward concludes his study of Selden in the Cambridge History of English Literature.[2]

1. Reynolds, p. XV.

2. Vol. VIII , Chap. XIII, Sec II, p. 374.

"Thus, a simple sheaf of sayings appraises us, were there nothing else to show it, how, for this great lawyer and deeply read scholar, the light of reason shone with the same clearness, calm rather than cold, whether it fell upon the ancient tomes of his library, or lit up the chambers of political or religious debate, or burnt in the lamp hanging in the sanctuary."

Selden's letters can be best treated in the next chapter, but it seems proper that some mention be made here of his poetry, small though it is in quantity and unimportant in quality. Sir John Suckling mentions Selden in the couplet in his Session of the Poets.

"There was Selden and he sate close by the Chair
Waiman not far off, which was very fair."

which seems to place him definately among the number, though Aikin chooses to consider this as meaning that Selden is called in by reason of his learning to assist Apollo, who occupies the chair in judging the contest, an hypothesis which seems reasonable, yet is not absolutely necessary, since Selden had written passable verse in three languages, was counted a member of the circles of Jonson and Drayton, and was a sort of sponsor for Wm. Browne, to whose Britannia's Pastorals, a really popular work at that time, he had prefixed commendatory verses. A more important fact is that not all of Suckling's Company are really important poets from even the contemporary, popular viewpoint. It would seem that the poet chose his company with reference to his own pleasure rather then individual poetic ability. Wood says that Selden wrote verses "to polish the rough stile which he affected principally in his Latin", a statement which makes one wish

he had cultivated the muse a bit more assiduously.

Selden's interest in poetry, however, may safely be considered as that of a young man of intellect but no poetic ability or natural inclination, whose interest was turned toward verse writing by friendly association with men distinguished in the field of poetic endeavor.

There are, in all, in the Collection of Selden's poems from various books set at the end of Volume Two of the Opera Omnia, five in Latin, four in Greek and two in English. Of the merit of the Greek verse I am in no way able to judge. Two of the Latin poems the Ad v.(irum) Cl.(arissimum), Ben Jonsonium, Carmen protreption and the Ad Amoris numina are written with some spirit and happiness of phrase, another Ad Arcturum Hopston [1] is an almost hopeless jumble of proper names. The English poems show the influence of Ben Jonson's classicism and are far clearer and less involved than much of Selden's prose. Since they are not generally known they may well be quoted here. The first is one of the three (in Greek, Latin, and English respectively) in Browne's "Britannia's Pastorals .

" So much a stranger my severer muse
Is not to love-strains, or a shepherd's reed,
But that she knows some rights of Phoebus dues
Of Pan and Pallas and her sisters meed.
Read, and commend she durst these rude essays
Of him that loves her (she hath ever found
Her studies as one circle) Next the prays

1. Arthur Hopston.

His readers be with rose and myrtle Crowned
No willow touch them ! as his baies are free
From wrong of bolts , so may their Chaplets be".

The one To His Worthy Friend Michael Drayton is perhaps less sustained throughout.

"I must admire thee, (but to praise were vain
What every tasting palate so approves),
Thy martial Pyrrhick, and thy Epick strain,
Digesting wars with heart uniting loves,
The two first authors of what is composed
In this round system all, it's antient lore
All arts in discords and concents are clos'd
(And when unwinged souls the fates restore
To th' darth for reparation of their flights
The first musicians, scholars, lovers make
The next rank destinate to Mars' knights
The following rabble meaner titles take)
I feel thy temples crown'd with Phoebus' rites,
Thy bay's to th' eye with lily mix'd and rose
As to the ear a diapason close."

But though Selden did not disgrace himself in these attempts, in which doubtless knowledge supplied the place of the poetic impulse, he was not interested in poetry as a literary form aside from its substance, and so found it pleasanter to confine himself to prose after his career as a young man about town had merged into that of a serious scholar and political leader. He read much poetry and quoted it

frequently, but his chief interest was in its content, its value as historical material and as part of the matter of philology . Thus we find that he quoted more from Robert of Gloucester than from many other English poet because that monkish verse maker's work contains a greater body of historical fact and more references of antiquarian interest. It is even more characteristic of this attitude that he thought as much of Ovid's knowledge of law as of his poetry, and that he valued most that great poet's poorest work, the Fasti, and greatly regreted the loss of a part of it, a loss which some critics have deemed a fortunate one for Ovid's fame.
He seems to have thought the printing of verses undignified on the part of a man on importance, and their writing a polite accomplishment or a bit of pleasant discipline for children. Coleridge, speaking of another observation of Selden on the subject of poetry, "The old poets had no reason but this their verse was sung to music: otherwise it had been a senseless thing to have fettered up themselves", says, "no man can know all things; even Selden here talks ignorantly"[1] to which might be added that no man can possess all qualities of mind and spirit . In Selden the poetic temperament was almost entirely lacking.

1. Works Vol. IV p. 379.

SELDEN'S LITERARY FRIENDSHIPS

IV.

Few great scholars or literary men of any age have enjoyed the acquaintance and friendship of so many illustrious contemporaries as did Selden. From the time when he first attracted attention by his learning, in the early years of his residence in the Inner Temple, to the day of his death, he numbered among his intimates many of the most brilliant scholars and writers of England and among his admirers and correspondents a goodly number of the intellecti of the world. It will be remembered that soon after his coming to the Inner Temple he made the acquaintance of the three great antiquaries of Elizabethan England, William Camden, Sir Robert Bruce Cotton, and Sir Henry Spelman. To the first of these of he addressed one of his Greek poems and to Cotton he dedicated his History ~~is~~ of Tythes, as well as his first work the Anelecta Anglo Brittanica. It is interesting to note the warmth of feeling and sincerity of tone which prevades the first few sentences of this dedication.

"Noble Sir,

Justice, no less than observance, urges me to inscribe this History of Tythes to your name. So great a part of it, was lent me by your most ready courtesy and able direction, that I restore it rather than give it you, and it cannot but receive an increase of estimation from your interest there seen in it. Nor to have borrowed your help, or used that your inestimable library,

1. In Cottoni Posthuma, London, 1672, the Ninth discourse is entitled "An answer to certain Arguments urged by a member of the House of Commons etc.

which lives in you assures a curious deligence in search after the inmost, least known, and most useful parts of historical truth, both of past and present ages. For such is the truth which your humanity liberally displaces; and such is that which by conference is learned from you."[1] But if Selden profited by the help of Sir Riberts' library, it was the interest of such men as Selden which made the work of collecting and caring for it worth while. There seem to be no grounds for crediting the remark attributed by Aubrey to Sir John Cotton, quoted in the Life of Cotton in the National Dictionary of Biography, to the effect that Selden kept manuscripts loaned to him by the early patron of his studies. Selden remained on good terms with Cotton until his death, though he had no part in his intrigues with Somerset and the Spanish ambassadors. After the death of Sir Robert Bruce Cotton, Selden enjoyed the hospitality of his son, Sir Thomas, who was even more careful of the library and more anxious to increase it than his father had been, and would scarcely have continued to loan Selden books and manuscripts had the latter appropriated them. As real proof of Selden's pleasant relations with the Cottons, father and son, and his gratitude for their services to him and the whole republic of letters is found in this item from his will.

"Item, To Sir Thomas Cotton, Bar.; A dozen of silver plates parcel gilt of Hercules's labours in a yellow case, and a cup of pearl shell set in silver gilt in a black case, marked 'I' and my Cabinet covered with crimson velvet, which is in prospective

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1. Opera Omnia, Vol. III, P. 1067.

the representation of the entrance of Hampton-Court."

With the last two great Elizabethan poets, Jonson and Drayton, Selden was also intimate. They were both men of great erudition as well as of poetic gifts, and doubtless the learning no less than the agreeable nature of Selden was a potent factor in forming and cementing these ~~these~~ two friendships. Jonson, whom Selden most probably met through Camden or Cotton, their common friends, addressed to him on the occassion of Selden's presenting him with a copy of the Titles of Honour the famous poetic Epistle to Master John Selden in which both Selden's learning and personal graces are praised in terms of apparently great sincerity. Jonson and Selden probably met frequently at the home of Sir Robert Cotton, whose library the poet and playwright used almost as industriously as did the scholar.

Among the letters to illustrious men collected in the back of volume two of the Opera Omnia is one in which Selden discussed at great length and with many learned digressions the lawfulness of the appearance of members of one sex in the garments of the other. He declares that the text "The woman shall not wear that which pertaineth to a man, neither shall a man put on a woman's garments, etc."[1] is corrupt owing to the failure of the vulgate Latin to correctly render the Hebrew and suggests changes, which, among other things, make the injunction on the woman's part for-

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1. Deuteronomy XXII, 5. Prynne quotes this with the comments of Tertullian and Cyprian. Histrio-mastix, 1633, p. 208 f.f.

bid only the wearing of armor. In addition he suggests that the prohibition is not absolute, but meant only to prevent immorality. It would be interesting to know what prompted Jonson's inquiry; but it seems reasonable to suppose that it had to do with some question of stage propriety, possibly one arising from the employment of boy players, and Puritan objections to the stage. Selden's liberality of mind in the support of the arts, particularly of the drama must have furnished an additional bond between himself and Jonson. Selden has given another expression of his views on this matter in Table Talk, C V, Poetry, Reynold's, pp. 134-135. "I never converted but two, the one was Mr. Crashaw[1] from writing against plays, by telling him a way how to understand that place, of putting on women's apparel, which has nothing to do with the business (as neither has it, that the fathers speak against plays in their time, with reason enough, for they had real idolatries mixed with their plays, having three altars continually upon the stage)."[2] The friendship of Selden and Jonson seems to have remained unbroken until Jonson's death. Dummond of Hawthornden, whom Ben Jonson visited when he had become morose and angry with some of his old friends, reports among other opinions by no means so pleasant and generous, only the most flattering remarks about Selden, whom the English poet described as "living upon his own, the bravest man in all languages, the law book of the judges of England."[3] It is interesting to

1. Not the poet; sometimes thought to have been his father, who was a Puritan divine.
2. See also Reynold's note.
3. Conversations.

note that the only reference to a particular play in the Table Talk has to do with Jonson's Bartholomew Fair.[1] It is perhaps worth ~~not~~mentioning in this connection that Selden was one of the committee charged with the management of a play produced by the Innes of Court as a proof of their loyalty and of dissent from Prynne's Histrio-mastix. Jonson was the intermediary between Selden and King James on the occasion of the summons to Theobald's after the publication of the History of Tythes.

The time and manner of Michael Drayton's meeting with Selden are unknown, but they were intimate associates in study and fast friends early in the period of Selden's residence at the Inner Temple. Drayton had a passionate interest in English antiquities, being in his fashion, a disciple of Camden, a circumstance which could not fail to commend him to the young author of Analecta Anglo Brittanica. In 1612 Drayton issued separately, the first eighteen books of his remarkable national poem Polyolbion to which Selden appended extensive notes abounding in learning, strange digressions, and obscure allusions. Why Selden did not edit the remainder of the poem is unknown. Drayton's nineteenth century editor, Hooper[2] warmly rejoins to Bishop Nicholson's statement that the last twelve were "hardly capable of such a respect," and professes to have corrected many errors of Wilkins in the text of the notes. Selden's

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1. Religion, CXXI, in Reynold's p. 165, also see note on Jonson and Inigo Jones.
2. Hooper, Richard; The complete works of Michael Drayton, London, 1876, Vol. I, pp. XX-XXIII.

commendatory poem on Drayton has been quoted in full in the preceding chapter.

The third poet with whom Selden was associated was William Browne, a member of the Inner Temple, who achieved great early fame by his authorship of Britannia's Pastorals in 1613 and 1616, and The Shepherd's Pipe in 1614. Selden's contribution of commendatory verses would not necessarily imply an extremely intimate association with Browne, since he shared the privilege with seventeen others, among whom were numbered, Drayton, Jonson and Selden's chamber fellow, Edward Hayward, were it not for the fact that, as noted in the foregoing chapter, he took the pains to write in three languages, and spoke of Browne with considerable warmth in the English poem quoted. Browne, for some reason, soon abandoned poetry and left London. Of his later life[1] little is known, except that he returned to Oxford, where he was tutor to Robert Earl of Caernarvon, was created master of arts in 1624, and enjoyed in his later years the patronage of William Earl of Pembroke.

Bacon and Selden probably met each other through mutual friends at the house of Sir Robert Cotton where Bacon often came to consult rare books and manuscripts. In 1619 when Bacon became Lord Chancellor, Selden addressed to him a discourse on the duties of that office, and upon his fall two years later Bacon consulted Selden upon the legality of the proceedings against

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1. Anderson, Robert, British Poets, London, 1795, Vol. II. p. 255 ff.

him.. Selden answered in a letter[1] dated Feb. 19, 1621, in which he upheld the legality of the affair against the questions raised by Bacon, but expressed doubts on other grounds. Bacon appointed Selden one of his literary executors to judge of the advisability of the publication or suppression of some of his manuscripts, a duty which Selden seems to have faithfully performed, though details are lacking.

Laud, who had a sincere interest in matters of erudition, sought desperately to secure Selden for the court and high church party. Selden seems to have received the archbishop's advances courteously, but to have declined to avail himself of the opportunity for preferment. He frequented the palace of Laud, dedicated to him his De Successionibus Ad Leges Ebraeorum in terms of great respect, and urged him to further interest in the advancement of learning, notably in the case of a coin collection, which Selden desired to see preserved intact; but he does not seem to have cherished anything bordering upon affection for the great prelate whose advocacy of the jus divinium must have been a continual matter of offense. He seems to have needed no urging to become a party to the impeachment of Laud a few years later, although he had no sympathy for the blind policy of the extremists which made Laud a martyr.

Usher met Selden during his visit to England in 1609 and the intimacy then formed was unbroken until the death of Selden forty-five years later. Selden was able to save Usher from much inconvenience and actual annoyance at the hands of the triumphant

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1. Referred to by Aiken, p. 45.

parliamentarians, and by a clever subterfuge prevented the confiscation and dispersal of Usher's priceless library, a service of importance to many generations of students. In their correspondence, the two are seen in the ideal relation of friends of the heart and comrades in learned pursuits, and it is everywhere evident that Selden had no small part in directing the course of his friend's studies and in bringing the results of his labors to the attention of the learned both in England and on the Continent. It was not without an element of touching appropriateness that the last public appearance of the great Primate of Ireland was at the grave-side of his life long friend, to whose memory he paid eloquent tribute.

In spite of the radical difference of their views on the subject of monarchy, Selden had much in common with Hobbes in his view of churchmen as the mere creatures of the state. How far Selden was impregnated with the philosophical scepticism of the royalist philosopher must remain, for the time at least, a matter of conjecture. Aubrey reports, that Hobbes was with Selden when he died, and that upon his advice, Selden refused the last ministrations of a waiting clergyman. Richard Baxter, on the other hand, quotes Sir Matthew Hale to the effect that he "was a resolved serious Christian; and that he was a great enemy to Hobbes, his errors", and so the matter rests. The fact remains, however, that Hobbes was a frequent visitor at White Friars after his return from France, that Selden's contract theory of government was not different in its essentials from that theory of mutual concession which Hobbes made the nucleus of his whole social philosophy,

and that any influence of the works of the one upon the other must have come from Selden to Hobbes, for the latter began to write after Selden's work was almost done, and long after he had set the civil law against the jus divinum. The whole problem might prove to involve nothing more than chance coincidence of views; yet it would seem worthy of rather painstaking investigation.

During the whole period of the long Parliament, he stood as the great bulwark of learning against the assaults of ignorant fanatics. Herbert Paul[1] has said that the University of Oxford was never better served in Parliament during all its long history than by Selden and certainly he alone saved the great center of English learning from severe punishment for its faithful adherence to the royal cause. He protected John Graves, the Orientalist and the Savilian lecturer at Oxford, when complaint was brought against him by the Parliamentary commissioners; and, still serving the cause of learning in another fashion, he persuaded Bulstrode Whitelocke to accept the custody of the St. James collection of coins and medals that it might not be injured or dispersed.[2] By his will he made generous provision for the completion of a work by Langbaine and Pococke, then in process of editing at Oxford. It will be remembered too, that while he was somewhat angered against his alma mater because the authorities had de-

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1. Men and Letters, p. 318.
2. See the N. D. B., vol. "Whitelocke" for a note on his stewardship.

clined to set aside a rule against the loaning of manuscripts, ~~but~~ it is significant that his executors felt themselves bound by his unwritten desire to place his own books in the Bodleian Library, where they remain not the least among its treasures.

Selden had many learned correspondents and admirers beyond the seas. He maintained an interchange of opinion with Peiresc[1] the great scholar of Provence, the patron of Scaliger and Salmasius, who had visited him in England in 1605, and, who, on learning that his lost marbles had come under Selden's investigation, forgot his disappointment, and rejoiced to know them in such good hands, Selden numbered, too, among his friends abroad, Girard Vossius, Marcus Meibomius, Louis De Dieu and Daniel Heinsius. There is preserved among the Epistolae one to Bulstrode Whitelocke then ambassador to Sweden, dated March 3, 1653, in which Selden thanks his friend for writing to him concerning Queen Christiana's appreciation of his work and solicitude for his failing health, together with many gallant compliments to the queen and the promise of a more material expression of his regard for her kindness, a promise which he did not live to fulfill. There is a story that Isaac Vossius, when at London, used to climb three long flights of stairs to visit Selden in his study at the Inner Temple and that sometimes, when Selden heard him below and was busy with his work, he would call down to him not to come up, whereat Vassius would go away, to return at another time. Meric Casaubon, in one of his letters, which Aikin mentions, says that he visited

1. Nicholas Claude Fabre de Peiresc. See Sandys, 385,387, etc.

Selden one day in the hope of securing his financial help in one of his scholarly projects, but that Selden received him so courteously and made him so handsome a present, as if he already knew his needs, that he had no heart for the discussion of money matters and went away without having mentioned his business.

So it is evident that, if, as Ben Jonson wrote, Selden although remaining at home, knew all lands and people, it was equally true that the learned of all lands knew and honored him.

The foregoing account of Selden's literary and scholarly associations is but the briefest sketch. A single volume of ample dimensionswould scarcely suffice for a full account of his friendships with men of talent and note. The limits of this thesis have not permitted of any consideration of his acquaintance with Purchas, to whom he addressed his Discourse on the Jews Formerly Living in England, Sir Kenelm Digby, Waller, Pocock, his disciple in oriental studies, who was destined to surpass him; Vincent, the herald, to whose son he was god father; Junius, the royal librarian, the second Earl of Arundel and Surrey, and a host of others. In concluding this chapter, however, I would mention two other friendships which have added nothing to his literary fame but bear eloquent testimony to his worth and fidelity; the first of these was that which bound him from his youth until the last five years of his life to the House of Kent, the second the life long association with his chamber fellow of the Inner Temple, Edward Hayward. It was soon after he came to the Inner Temple that Selden came under the patronage of the ninth Earl, Henry

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1. "Stand forth my object then: You that have been
ever at home; yet have all countries seen."

Grey. Whether or not he was steward, or, merely a permanently retained counsel, is an arguable question, but fortunately, it is one of no importance one way or another, as a proof of his long and happy relations with the family. During his early political troubles the Earl constantly befriended him, and when Selden found need of rest and quiet leisure for study, he was hospitably received at the Earl's country seat at Wrest in Bedfordshire. In his Table Talk[1] he speaks with a sort of pride in the antiquity of the earldom of Kent and there is reason to believe that he always regarded the whole family with gratitude and affection. After the Earl died in 1639, Selden took over the affairs of the countess dowager and lived between Wrest and her town house, White Friars. Aubrey, as noted before is the only authority for the story of Selden's marriage to the countess and it seems reasonable to believe, as in many other matters, he is a mere recorder of gossip, for it is highly improbable that a marriage of such importance could have been overlooked. The countess survived the Earl eleven years, and upon her death left all of her great estates which could be so disposed of, to Selden who had been the faithful administrator of them in her lifetime. During the three remaining years of his life he lived at White Friars, maintaining there the state and hospitality which had been the pride and pleasure of his patrons. In the last item of his will there is more warmth than in any of the preceding. It runs in this fashion:

"item, To Mr. Grey Longeville, a basin and ewer and two dozen of plates, all parcel gilt in several red cases, marked C, D, E, F, which were his great uncles, Henry Earl of Kent, and

1. CXXI Religion, Reynolds, p. 163,ff.

afterward to Charles Earl of Kent, his grandfather, and then to Henry Earl of Kent, his uncle, the brother of Earl Charles, a fit heirloom for his family, together with a hat band set round with diamonds, and which his said uncle usually wore, and is increased by me about the buckle with a broad diamond, and some others besides."

Edward Heyward was a successful lawyer of the Inner Temple, a man of no mean learning and some literary talents, but his chief claim to the memory of posterity lay in the fact that he was the chamber fellow of Selden's youth, and his friend for an even half century. In one of those evily insinuating passages from Aubrey quoted by Wood[1] Heyward is called Selden's flatterer. The idea is, of course, preposterous. Flatterers do not succeed for fifty years at a stretch, and it is especially difficult to conceive of anyone successfully flattering John Selden, who had so little of that sort of vanity which loves to be stroked, and cared so little for public praise and honors. It seems far more reasonable to put faith in the Epistle of Ben Jonson.

"He thou hast giv'n it[2] to,
Thy learned chamber-fellow, knows to do
It true respects. He will not only love,
Embrace and cherish, but he can approve
And estimate thy pains, as having wrought
In the same mines of knowledge; and thence brought

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1. Athenae Oxonienses. Vol. III, p. 380. Bliss, note, refers it to Fabian Philipp's authority.
2. The Titles of Honour.

Humanity enough to be a friend,
  And strength to be a champion, and defend
Thy gift 'gainst envy. O how I do count
  Among my comings in, and see it mount,
Thegain of thy two friendships! Hayward and
  Selden! two names that so much understand!
On whom I could take up, and ne'er abuse
  The credit, what would furnish a tenth muse!
But here's no time nor place my wealth to tell,
  You both are modest. So am I. Farewell."[1]

Strange words truly for a poet to use in writing of the "flatterer" of a friend!

The friendships of men like Bacon and Jonson is doubtless remembered to the credit of Selden by many who forget the very name of Edward Hayward, yet those fifty years of mutual love between the two chamber-fellows is more to the glory of the great writer and scholar, than the praises of all those learned men of Europe who delighted to do him honor; for through it we see the real Selden, the man rather than the scholar, "whose mind was as great as his learning, full of generosity, and harbouring nothing that seemed base." [2]

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1. An Epistle to Master John Selden among Jonson's poems. Anderson, British Poets, Vol. Iv.
2. Wood, Athenae, Oxonienses, vol. III, p. 368.

V

SELDEN'S POSITION

In the foregoing chapters I have sought to give some idea of Selden's political life, his literary work, and his unique and enviable position among his contemporaries. In this last I shall endeavor to give the conclusions to which this study has lead me and to justify my opinion that Selden is entitled to more attention on the part of the more serious sort of readers than he is receiving at present.

In the main, the admiration of contemporaries is of more value than the indifference of later ages in arriving at something approximating a true estimate of Selden's importance in the history of English literature, for according to their opinions he was highly valued and judged worthy of imitation. It is right and proper, that a writer whose work wins the easy approval of the multitude should be forgotten, if it fails alike to receive the approbation of critical students, and to maintain that popular favor which it once so easily enjoyed. It is not equally fitting and proper, however, that an author who writes with the serious purpose of building a literary edifice for all time, and who enjoys the approval of the greatest minds of his own day, should suffer the general neglect which has been accorded to Selden, merely, because he was too thoroughly the child of his own time in his manner of expression. To have been the dictator of learning, in the most learned age of English literature, should be in itself a guarantee of a splendid immortality.

How great was Selden's reputation among his contemporaries has already been shown. An analysis of his influence is a more difficult task. His work was less one of presenting a style for imitation, than one of giving Englishmen an interest in learning and a pride in English achievement. If he cared little for English style and overloaded his text with quotations, he may be pardoned. Jacobean and Caroline England had not yet acquired confidence in the value of its own language. The conquests of Louis XIV had not yet shaken the position of Latin as the world language. James I had his English work translated into Latin as did Bacon.[1] Selden wished to write for the world not for England alone, for eternity rather than for a few generations; and for the crushing of his English style under the weight of a heavy and learned Latin he may, when we consider his motives, be readily forgiven.

As for his quotation, Isaace Disraeli has said that the seventeenth century was "an age in which authority was considered stronger than opinion",[2] and Selden in his literary work saught above all other things strength. It must be said to his additional credit that he was not blinded by authority, was no

1 Isaac Disraeli in his Literary Character of James I, London, Frederick Warne &Co., p.389, says, "Many of our own great authors yet imagined there was no fame for an Englishman unless he neglected his maternal language for the artificial labour of the idiom of ancient Rome."

2 Ibid., p.388.

slave to the magic of the printed or manuscript page, but weighed all things in the balance of his own clear judgement seeking always to trace a piece of information back to its original source. In so doing he broke away from such remnants of maedieval credulity as had persisted through the Renaissance. His statement of his critical attitude might well be the creed of a twentieth century researcher:

"I justify all by the self authors cited, crediting no transcribers but when of necessity I must. My thirst compelled me always to seek the fountain, and by that, if means grant it judge the river's nature. Nor can any conversant in letters be ignorant what error is ofttimes fallen into by trusting authorities at second hand and rash collecting (as it were) from visual beams refracted from anothers eye."[1]

Savile had laid the foundations of English textual criticism. Camden was the first true organizer of antiquarian research. Selden combined the two and so became the father of English archaeology and the first of a new type of scholar which was to persist even to the present time. The greatest of this new school, Bentley, though he found fault with Selden's conclusions in his study of the Arundel marbles, saw in him[2] the ideal representative

1 Hooper's ed., Drayton's Polyolbion "To the Reader", p.xliv.

2 "Who studies ancient laws and rites,
Tongues, arts, and arms, and history;
Must drudge like Selden, days and nights,
And in the endless labour die"

From his only known English verses. Boswell's Life of Johnson, Hill ed., Oxford 1887, vol.lv, p.23, note.

of his class.To this great service he added another,the foundation of English Oriental studies,and if in this the pupil,Pococke, surpassed the master,Selden's kindness and generosity made it possible.

In the work of men of as widely differing characters as Usher,Langbaine,and Pococke the influence of Selden was very evident. Milton,too,found Selden's literary creed as expressed in still another portion of his work worth mentioning in his Areopagitica[1],and it is perhaps significant that the position taken by Milton in that essay is that held by Selden in his plea for the booksellers,February12,1629.Unfortunately Selden's speech on that occasion has not been preserved.

1 "Whereof what better witness can ye expect I should produce than one of you now sitting in parliament,the chief of learned men reputed in this land,Mr.Selden;whose volume of natural and national laws(De Jure et Gentium juxta Disciplinam Hebraeorum) proves,not only by good authorities brought together,but by exquisite reasons and theorems almost mathematically demonstrative,that all opinions yea errors,known read and collated,are of main service and assistance toward the speedy attainment of what is truest."

Riverside Edition, ed.Lockwood,Laura,Cambridge, Houghton Mifflin Co.,p.66 & note.

The same book is referred to,Prose Works,London,1890, vol.III,p.269.

Milton's indebtedness to Selden for the demonology of Paradise Lost has been commented upon by both Gibbon[1] and Milman[2]. So it will be seen that the influence of Selden was confined to no single division of English literary and scholarly effort,a fact which justifies that remark of Sir William Temple which doubtless seems strange to some modern readers:

"The great wits of the moderns have been,in my opinion, and in their several kinds,of the Italians,Boccace,Machiavel,and Padre Paolo;among the Spaniards,Cervantes(who writ Don Quixote) and Guevara; among the French,Rabelais and Montaigne;among the English,Sir Philip Sidney,Bacon and Selden."[3]

1"For the enumeration of the Syrian and Arabian deities,it may be observed that Milton has comprised in one hundred lines the two large and learned syntagmas which Selden had composed on that abstruse subject."

Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire,Philadelphia 1871,ch.xv, p.510,note.

2 "Remark Milton's wonderful sublimity,not merely in his central figure of him who had not lost all his original brightness,but was not less than archangel ruined,but in his creation,it might almost be said,out of Selden's book and the few allusions in the Old Testament of a new demonology...I owe the germ of this observation to my friend,Mr.(afterwards Lord)Macauley."

History of Latin Christianity,London,1854-56,vol.vi,lib.xiv,ch.2, note.

3. Works,Edinburgh,1754,vol.ii,p.175.

Out of the fusion of old English prose and classic models, in which the simplicity of the one was, for the time being, destroyed by the involved structure of the other, which took place in the first half of the seventeenth century, there were to come at last the smooth styles of Cowley, Dryden, and Temple. If Selden was overwhelmed in this confusion and failed to attain to the majesty of Milton or the almost lyric rhythm of Sir Thomas Browne, who both shared this tendency toward labored latinate constructions, it was because he lacked their redeeming vein of poetry.

Selden's style is not so utterly unrelieved by any semblance of beauty as some critics would have us believe.[1] It is true that it could never have been read with unadulterated pleasure and that a vast number of passages are hopelessly obscure or tediously involved. Now and then, however, when he forgets himself and falls into a half colloquial style, or when moved by strong emotion, he is capable of utterance of an almost epigrammatic clearness and force. He often delivered himself of strange and fearful sentences like the first in the address to the reader at the beginning of the Duello;

" Reader I open not a fence-school, nor shall you here learn the skill of an encounter, or advantageously in the lists to traverse your ground: historical tradition of use and succint description of ceremony, are my ends; both deduced from the antients but without proselenick affectation."

or that other with which he commences the main body of the same work;

The name (for the true notation of a subject is in no treatise to be neglected, but by the very auspicy of letter-labour, by

logick doctrine is thence to be taken) of the duello or duellum, is after some, quasi duorum bellum while others judge that this derivation stands rather conceited upon the affinity of similary sound in pronunciation than in true criticism."

But Selden could also write like this; and in sentences of this sort we have a hint of his undeveloped abilities;[1]

"For as on one side, it can not be doubted but that the too studious affectation of bare and sterile antiquity, which is nothing else but to be exceedingly busy about nothing, may soon descend to a dotage; so on the other hand the neglect or only vulgar regard of the fruitful and precious part of it, which gives necessary light to the present, in matters of state, law, history, and the understanding of good authors, is but preferring that kind of ignorant infancy,[2] which our short life alone allows us before the many ages of former experience and observation, which may so accumulate years to us, as if we had lived even from the beginning of time."[3]

In these simple and direct words he justifies the celebration of Christmas against Puritan objection;

"For princes and private persons, even to this day a celebration is in use at the yearly returning of their birthdays.

1 " If Selden had written more in the vernacular and had devoted his powers to literature rather than to learning, he would have been unsurpassed in the union of instruction and entertainment." The English Essay and Essayists, Walker, Hugh; London, Toronto & New York, 1915, p.38.

2 There seems to be an echo here of the Ciceronian, nescire quid, antea quam natus sis, acciderit, id est semper puerum.

3 Dedication of the History of Tythes; Opera Omnia, vol.iii, p.140

To deny, therefore, with that way-ward sect, such an anniversary to the Saviour of the World, were to think him less worthy of it than false gods were esteemed by the Gentiles, than princes by their subjects, than private friends by their greater friends, whose birthdays they have yearly celebrated."[1]

When the joy of battle was upon Selden his style cleared in remarkable fashion. Note how he sets upon Tillesley one of the high church critics of his History of Tythes.

"Something you look for, reader, in reply to this hot and busy doctor; and something you have here which shortly satisfies all, but his unmannerly fits of language. Neither he, nor the rest of them that publickly rave at me can infect me with that disease. Only this much I learn of them; that all mad men are not in Bedlam; those that are there I pity; some others that are not I laugh at; and I know how to value barking at moonshine. But now to his animadversions."

The Admonition to Readers of Sir James Sempil's Appendix contains many passages of a verve and irony equal to this:

" A strange fortune that Sir James should pick on this one passage[2] to commend me for, which another, who I hear hath mountains of paper that are big with child against me, takes to be a character of my lack of Christianity; as if I had qualified an express testimony of our Saviour with 'it seemeth'. I hope Sir James will defend me here. But I would have that other know, who in excepting against me either understands not English or

1 The Birthday of Our Saviour; Opera Omnia, vol. iii, p. 1406.
2 One in the History of Tythes relating to herb payments by Pharisees

else is lead by mere malice, that I inserted these two words, 'it seemeth' upon most wary considerations and out of deference to Holy Writ."[1]

Like other unusual styles, that of Selden becomes easier and more pleasant to read upon better acquaintance. It will be found that a continued perusal of his works will somewhat undermine one's concurrence in the unfavorable opinions of those who have most severely condemned his peculiarities of diction.

But Selden's greatest contribution to English literature lay not so much in the manner of his writing, or in its far more valuable content. It lay rather in the fact that he gave to England a higher position in the eyes of the whole republic of letters; for he was the first of Englishmen[1] since the beginning of the Renaissance to vie with the great scholars of the Continent in the treatment of questions involving vast erudition and accuracy of judgment. It may seem strange to give him a place before Francis Bacon, but the fact remains that learned Europe ~~did~~ did not in the life time of the great philosopher accord him that

1 "On tracing backwards the stream of English erudition, I soon came to two names which seemed to form an era, previously to which our contributions to the stock ~~to the stock~~ of critical literature were comparatively inconsiderable; whilst those two names themselves were annexed to writings quoted and applauded by the most eminent contemporary scholars in Europe. These were Selden and Usher"

Aikin, preface, p.p. v-vi.

See also Aikin, introduction, p.xiii. Aikin, throughout, assigns to Selden a higher place than to Usher.

universal admiration which it showed for the work of his literary executor.

The titles applied to him by foreign scholars already quoted as, honor Brittaniae, magnus dictator, and the like, are further proof of the importance of his services. The fairest portion of his fame lies in the fact that he was the first Englishman since the great doctors of the Middle Ages to command a truly great international audience.

Selden's claim then to a high place among the literary men of seventeenth century England rests upon four major points which have been treated in this study; the judgment of contemporaries and immediate successors who were practically unanimous in assigning to him a very high rank; the fact that he enjoyed an international reputation such as no Englishman had previously known and so gave a world scope to English scholarship and literary effort; his use of his unique position as a litterateur, statesman, and man of the world for the furtherance of all intellectual activities particularly literature and antiquarian research; and last, the merits of his own works, so often obscured by faults which arose less from his personal limitations than from the usage of an age which in its methods of thought and canons of taste bore little resemblance to our own. Selden lived in a period of change when the ideals of the Renaissance were beginning to give place to those of the true Modern period. When he died, Shakespeare, Jonson, and Bacon were only memories. He was the last surviving great man of letters who had attained high renown in Jacobean England. As Carew and Herrick linked the poetry of the times of Elizabeth and James with the new schools of the Revolution and early Restoration, so in scholarship he joined

the England of Savile and Camden to the new England of Richard Bentley. Younger men like Milton and Dryden had been nourished upon the same intellectual food and still looked toward the ancients, but, though still concealed, the modern spirit was quickening in them. The old was not yet to pass away utterly, but its fate was written, its deepest foundations undermined. The supremacy of humanism was soon to be challenged. Never again was the old learning so completely to dominate the hearts of men.

Selden like Bacon gave much to the moderns. The Royal Society was but the organization of those interests which according to their own personal bents they had ever pursued. But though he gave richly to the new order he was still of the old. All his life long he followed the gleam of the Renaissance. Age brought no disillusion. He died with face toward the far goal still hard upon the quest.

The multitude will never read Selden. Table Talk, the easiest reading among all his works is an invitation to serious meditation rather than means of escape from thought. He will ever be more beloved of the classical reactionary than of the radical; and that is as he would have wished it.

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